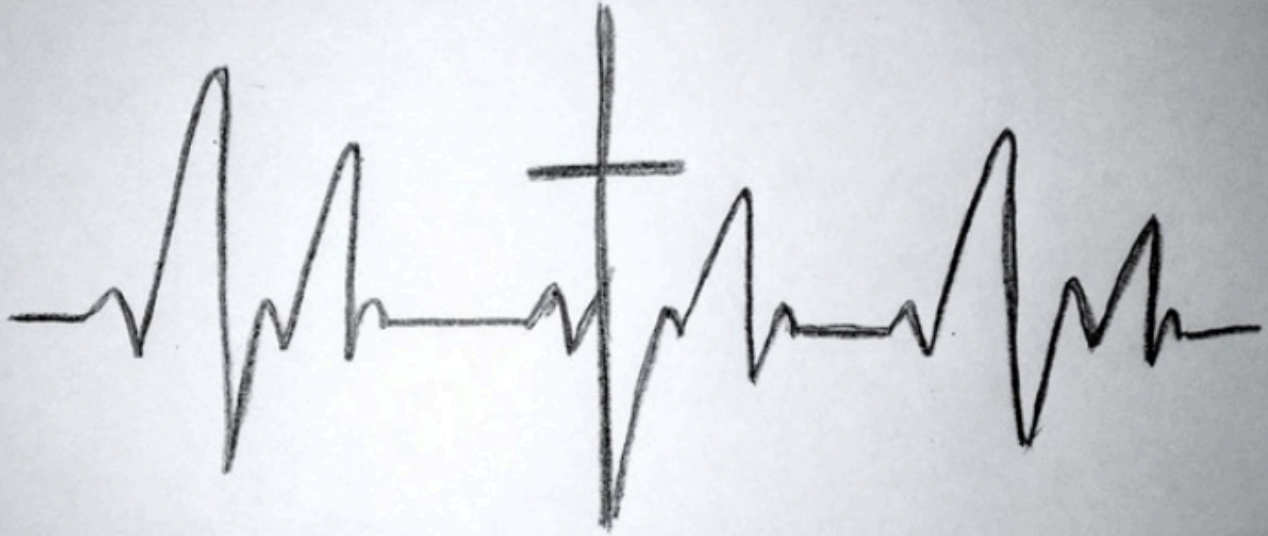


The Forgotten Medicine



Repentance and Confession

Priest Intro

New Testament Passage

1 John 1:5-10

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Discussion Questions

The Lord is faithful in his promises. He wants to bless us and is waiting for us to come to Him so he may purify and bless us. How can we then show him that we are willing to be purified?

When we go to our father of Confession. Do we go because we truly want purification or is it because we think we are obliged to as Orthodox Christians?

How often do we prepare for confession, making sure all our sins are poured out before our father of Confession and our Father in Heaven?

FOCUS QUOTE

"Is our repentance driven from fear, Or out of sadness that we broke the heart of One who love us?"

– Bishop Kallistos Ware

"Are you sad because you sinned, or because you saddened God's heart? Is all you think about how to be rid of the punishment of sin, or do you desire to restore the love and relationship between you and God?"

– Pope Shenouda III

Old Testament Passage

Joel 2:12-27

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him— A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, “Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’ ” Then the LORD will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. The LORD will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations. “But I will remove far from you the northern army, And will drive him away into a barren and desolate land, With his face toward the eastern sea And his back toward the western sea; His stench will come up, And his foul odor will rise, Because he has done monstrous things.” Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things! Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you— The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame. Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.”

Discussion Questions

CHALLENGE

Make a commitment to message or call a priest before the end of today and organise a time for confession. Also, spend a few minutes every night this week ask God to reveal your sins for an honest confession. Spend time praying for forgiveness, grace and mercy.*

Should my repentance mainly be an outward or an inward endeavour? Is it primarily, a matter of changing ones actions or of quiet reflection and prayer with the Lord?

Joel tells us to “rend our heart” first, thus do we repent with our hearts before our actions? How can I make the repentance of my heart the first step, allowing it to be a platform for a more outward repentance?

Is it wrong to do the outward actions (fasting, prostrations, and even confession) if I don't feel that my heart truly desires to repent?

PRAYER

O' Holy Father, who awaits the return of sinners, You promised that You are always ready to accept a repent heart. Look now upon my humble and miserable soul that was lost in the valleys of disobedience. I have tasted the bitterness of misery for too long when I strayed from You.

Now I come back to You to be purified, accept and do not reject me, for when You look at me with mercy and compassion, I will be cleansed and saved. If you turn away, I shall perish. Grant me O Lord, Your blessing to strengthen my will to come closer to You in faith and hope, to confess my sins and detest returning to them.

May Your Holy Spirit remind me not to stray. May You enlighten my heart so I can see the graveness of my sins and negligence and have the will to obey Your commandments and live for the Glory of Your Holy Name. Amen.

Priest Outro

*Group leader to remind the group about the challenge throughout the month